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Conference Abstract

Collections Management from the Public Floor; Exhibit Registrars and Preparators Fight against Light, Dust and the Public

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Abstract

In thinking about collections management and assessing collection risk, it is easy to think of the collections division and the research staff. However, when an institution places a research specimen or object on public display, the exhibits staff become the frontline collections-care personnel. At the California Academy of Sciences, after a specimen leaves the collection storage in the research division, it is the Exhibit Registrars and the Preparators that take on the due diligence of safeguarding and protecting the specimen.

The objective of this talk is to highlight the challenges and successes of protecting research collections on the public floor, from the perspective of a non-traditional collections department. While the agents of deterioration, such as light, water, and pests, are the same no matter where a specimen is, it is now the public-facing staff checking in on the objects. This talk will share the tools the California Academy of Sciences Exhibits Department deploys in monitoring case and gallery environmental conditions, the challenges of the building facilities and staffing in providing consistent protection of collections on display, and the critical inter-departmental relationships necessary to successfully safeguard specimens on public view, and building-wide.

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Keywords

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